Appl. No. 09/997,269
Amdt. dated **June 10, 2004**
Reply to Office Action of January 21, 2004

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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Original) A computer-implemented method of managing documents related to a patent application, said method comprising:

storing a plurality electronic documents related to a patent application in a database accessible to a server system, wherein each of said plurality of electronic documents has a document type and wherein said plurality of stored documents includes at least one document having a first document type and at least one document having a second document type;

storing a rule in said database that indicates specific document types to be deleted from said database in response to a predetermined event occurring related to prosecution of said patent application, wherein said rule indicates that documents of said second type should be deleted but not documents of said first type;

receiving a signal at said server system indicating said predetermined event has occurred;

after receiving said signal, implementing said rule to delete documents of said second type in said database that are related to said patent application but not delete documents of said first type that are related to said patent application.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said predetermined event is either grant of a patent from said patent application or payment of an issue fee for said patent.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said predetermined event is a signal received from an authorized client system.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said first document type is a filed patent application and wherein said second document type is a draft patent application.

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5.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said patent application is assigned to a first technology developer and wherein said signal is generated by a client system associated with said first technology developer.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 5 wherein said client system is associated with a patent practitioner that represents said first technology developer.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said executing step is in response to receipt of said signal.

8.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of electronic documents also includes at least one document having a third document type, said third document type being associated with unofficial notes from an inventor of said patent application to [[an]] a practitioner, and wherein said rule causes said server to delete documents of said third type associated with said patent application during said executing step.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of electronic documents also includes at least one document having a fourth document type, said fourth document type being associated with versions of patent papers stored in said database in an image file format that were generated by a patent office, and wherein said rule does not cause said server to delete documents of said fourth type associated with said patent application during said executing step.

10.   (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising allowing a client system to create and/or modify said rule that defines specific document types to be deleted and/or specific types of documents to be saved in response to receiving said signal.

11.   (Original) A computer-implemented method of managing documents related to a patent application, said method comprising:

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storing a plurality electronic documents related to a patent application in a database accessible to a server system, wherein each of said plurality of electronic documents has one or more attributes associated therewith;

storing a rule in said database that determines specific electronic documents to be deleted from said database in response to a predetermined event occurring related to prosecution of said patent application, wherein said rule deletes documents having a predetermined attribute;

receiving a signal at said server system indicating said predetermined event has occurred;

after receiving said signal, implementing said rule to delete documents from said database that are related to said patent application and have said predetermined attribute but does not delete documents from said database that are related to said patent application and do not have said predetermined attribute.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said predetermined event is a grant of a patent from said patent application.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said predetermined event is payment of an issue fee for said patent application.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said patent application is assigned to a first technology developer and wherein said signal is generated by a client system associated with said first technology developer.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said executing step is in response to receipt of said signal.

16. (Currently Amended) A server system for managing information related to patent applications, said server system comprising:

(a) a processor;

(b) a database; and

(c) a memory for storing a program;

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wherein said processor is operative with said program to:

(i)   store, in said database, ~~information~~ <u>a plurality of electronic documents</u> related to a patent application, said ~~information~~ <u>electronic documents</u> including at least an invention disclosure, a patent application as filed in an official patent office, unofficial documents related to said patent application and one or more papers generated by said official patent office that are related to said patent application;

(ii)   in response to an indication from said official patent office that said patent application has been allowed, receive an instruction to categorize said patent application as allowed in said database and automatically delete said unofficial documents related to said patent application from said database.

17.   (Original) The server system of claim 16 wherein said processor is operative with said program to allow a client system to set-up workflow rules related to defining specific types of documents to be deleted and/or specific types of documents to be saved in response to receiving an instruction that a patent application has been allowed.

18.   (Currently Amended) The server system of claim 16 wherein said unofficial documents include one or more of: notes from an inventor of said patent application to [[an]] <u>a</u> practitioner, draft copies of said patent application and draft copies of Responses to Office Actions.

19.   (Previously Presented) A method of managing a plurality of electronic documents associated with a patent application, the method comprising:

storing the plurality of electronic documents in a computer-readable memory, wherein the plurality of electronic documents includes a first plurality of electronic documents that are desired to be maintained in the computer-readable memory after the allowance and granting of a patent from the patent application and a second plurality of electronic documents that are desired to be deleted after the allowance or granting of a patent from the patent application;

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receiving a request to delete the second plurality of electronic documents from the memory; and

in response to the request, deleting the second plurality of electronic documents while retaining the first plurality of electronic documents.

20.   (Previously Presented) The method set forth in claim 19 wherein the plurality of electronic documents are stored in a database that is accessed through a database management system.

21.   (Previously Presented) The method set forth in claim 20 wherein each document in the plurality of electronic documents has an attribute associated with it that identifies the document as belonging to either the first plurality of electronic documents or the second plurality of electronic documents.

22.   (Previously Presented) The method set forth in claim 21 further comprising storing a rule in the database that generates the request to delete the second plurality of documents in response to the occurrence of a predetermined event.

23.   (Previously Presented) The method set forth in claim 22 wherein the predetermined event is one of: payment of an issue fee for a patent application or granting of a patent from the patent application.

24.   (Currently Amended) The method set forth in claim 23 wherein the granting of a patent from the patent application is identified by either a signal sent from an authorized client system or association of a .pdf an image file of the granted patent with the patent application.

25.   (Previously Presented) The method set forth in claim 20 wherein each of the plurality of electronic documents has a document type associated with it; wherein the method further comprises storing a rule in the database that identifies the first and second pluralities of

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electronic documents based on each document's document type in response to a predetermined event; and wherein the request is generated after execution of the rule.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method set forth in claim 19 wherein the request is generated by a user.

27.   (Previously Presented) A computer system that manages a plurality of electronic documents associated with a patent application, the computer system comprising:

a processor;

a database and a database manager; and

a computer-readable memory that stores a computer program, wherein the processor is operative with the computer program to:

(i)   store the plurality of electronic documents in a computer-readable memory that can be accessed with the database manager, the plurality of electronic documents including a first plurality of electronic documents that are desired to be maintained in the database after the allowance and granting of a patent from the patent application and a second plurality of electronic documents that are desired to be deleted from the database after the allowance or granting of a patent from the patent application;

(ii)   receive a request to delete the second plurality of electronic documents from the database; and

(iii)   in response to the request, delete the second plurality of electronic documents from the database while retaining the first plurality of electronic documents in the database.

28.   (Previously Presented) The computer system set forth in claim 27 wherein each document in the plurality of electronic documents has an attribute associated with it that identifies the document as belonging to either the first plurality of electronic documents or the second plurality of electronic documents.

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29. (Previously Presented) The computer system set forth in claim 28 further comprising storing a rule in the database that generates the request to delete the second plurality of documents in response to the occurrence of a predetermined event.

30. (Previously Presented) The method set forth in claim 29 wherein the predetermined event is one of: payment of an issue fee for a patent application or granting of a patent from the patent application.

31. (Currently Amended) The computer system set forth in claim 30 wherein the granting of a patent from the patent application is identified by either a signal sent from an authorized client system or association of ~~a .pdf~~ an image file of the granted patent with the patent application.

32. (Previously Presented) The computer system set forth in claim 27 wherein each of the plurality of electronic documents has a document type associated with it; wherein the system further comprises storing a rule in the database that identifies the first and second pluralities of electronic documents based on each document's document type in response to a predetermined event; and wherein the request is generated after execution of the rule.

33. (Previously Presented) The computer system set forth in claim 27 wherein the request is generated by a user.

34. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of electronic documents comprises word-processed document files, form-based document files and image files.

35. (New) The method of claim 34 wherein each electronic document in the plurality of electronic documents has document meta data associated with the document that identifies the document.

36. (New) The method of claim 35 wherein the document meta data further identifies the history of each document.

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37.   (New) The method of claim 19 wherein said plurality of electronic documents comprises word-processed document files, form-based document files and image files.

38.   (New) The method of claim 37 wherein each electronic document in the plurality of electronic documents has document meta data associated with the document that identifies the document.

39.   (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the document meta data further identifies the history of each document

40.   (New) A method of managing electronic documents related to a plurality of patent applications, the method comprising:

storing a plurality of collections of electronic documents and data in a computer-readable memory operatively coupled to a server system, each collection being associated with one of the plurality of patent applications and each collection including a plurality of electronic documents and a plurality of data related to its respective patent application, the plurality of collections of electronic documents including at least a first collection associated with a first patent application and a second collection associated with a second patent application different from the first patent application;

storing a rule in a computer-readable memory that identifies electronic documents to be deleted from the plurality of collections of electronic documents in response to occurrence of a predetermined event associated with a patent application, wherein the documents are identified by a document type or an attribute associated with the documents;

receiving a signal at the server system indicating the predetermined event has occurred with respect to the first patent application;

after receiving the signal, implementing the rule to identify electronic documents from the first collection of electronic documents associated with the first patent application without identifying electronic documents from other collections of electronic documents

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associated with other patent applications including the second collection of electronic documents associated with the second patent application; and

deleting the identified electronic documents.

41.   (New) The method of claim 40 wherein the electronic documents in the plurality of collections comprise word-processed document files, form-based document files and image files.

42.   (New) The method of claim 41 wherein each electronic document in the plurality of collections of electronic documents has document meta data associated with the document that identifies the document.

43.   (New) The method of claim 42 wherein the document meta data further identifies the history of each document.